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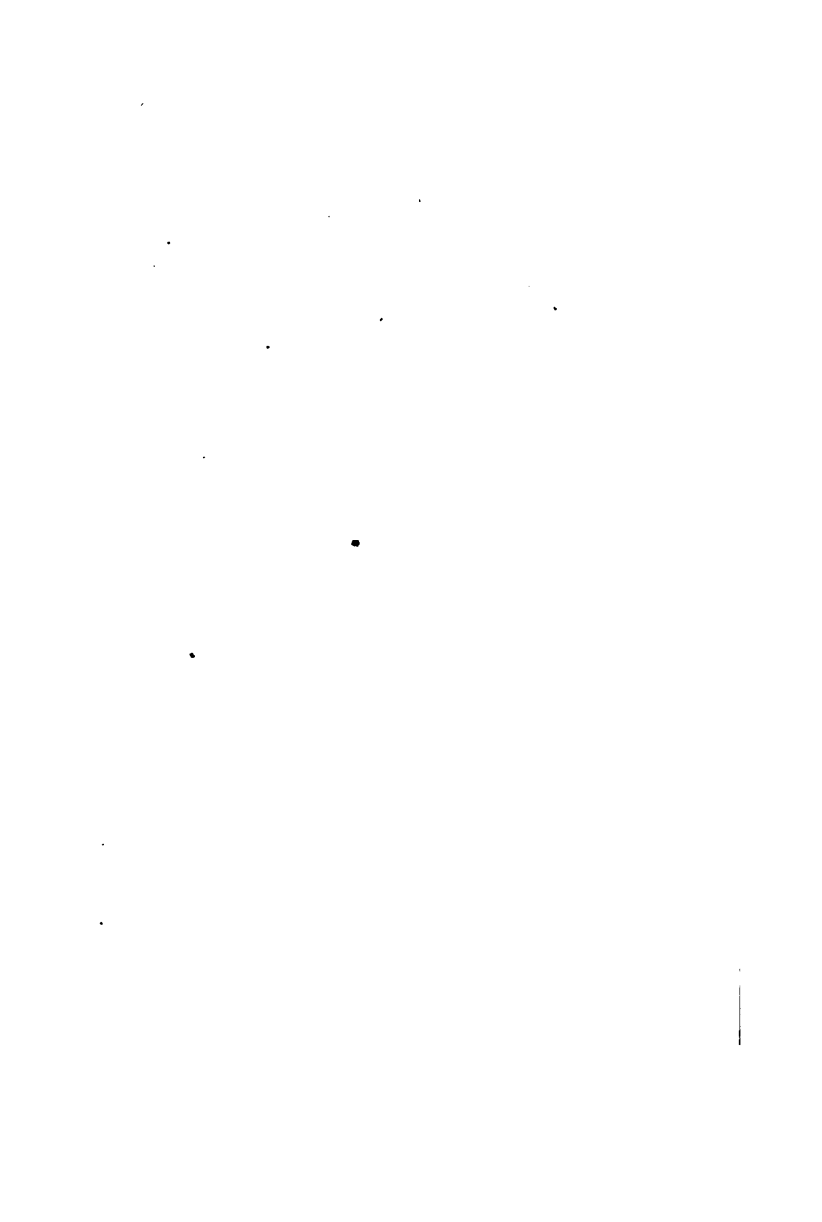




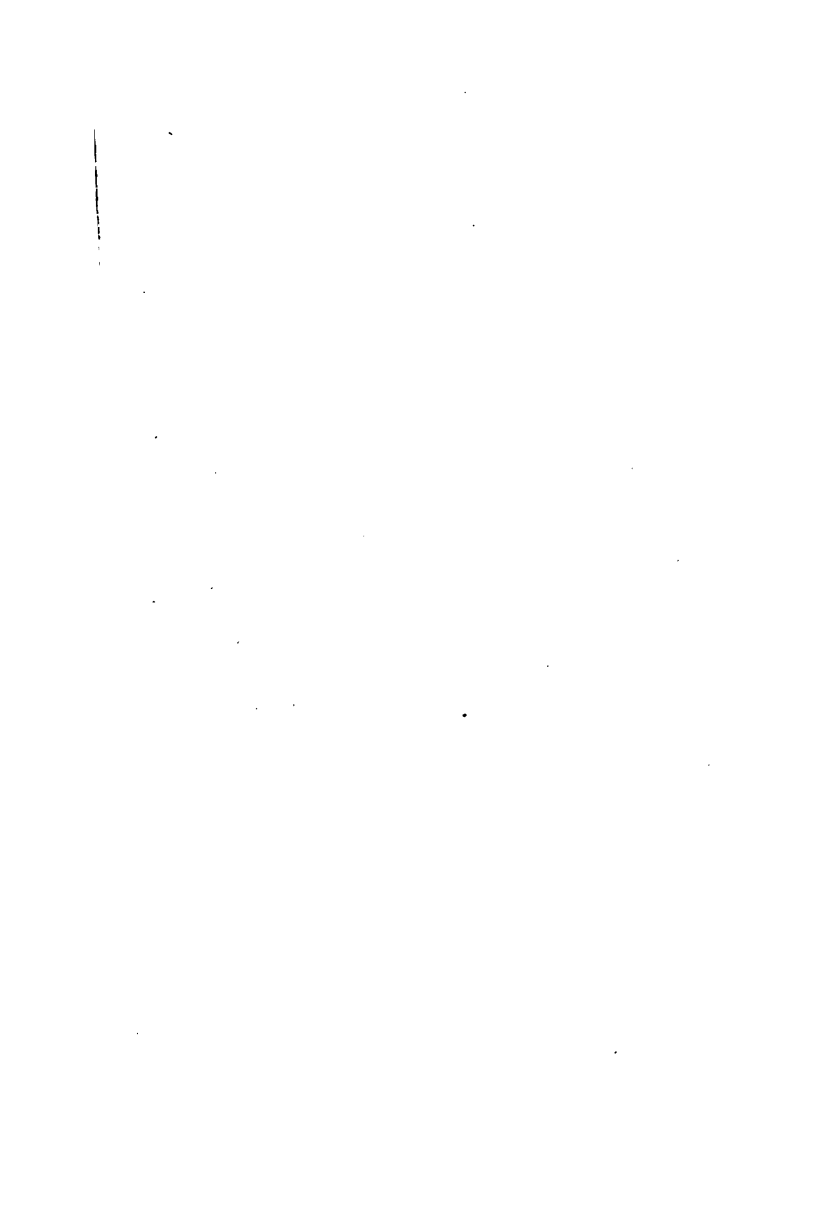
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W.H. Brooks del.

J. Engleheart scul.

— **MRS CLIFFORD RELATING**  
**TO ALFRED THE HISTORY OF THE FIELD MOUSE.**  
*Vide Page 11.*

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ADVENTURES OF  
**LITTLE DOWNY,**  
THE FIELD MOUSE.

AND THEN

**LITTLE PRISONER;**

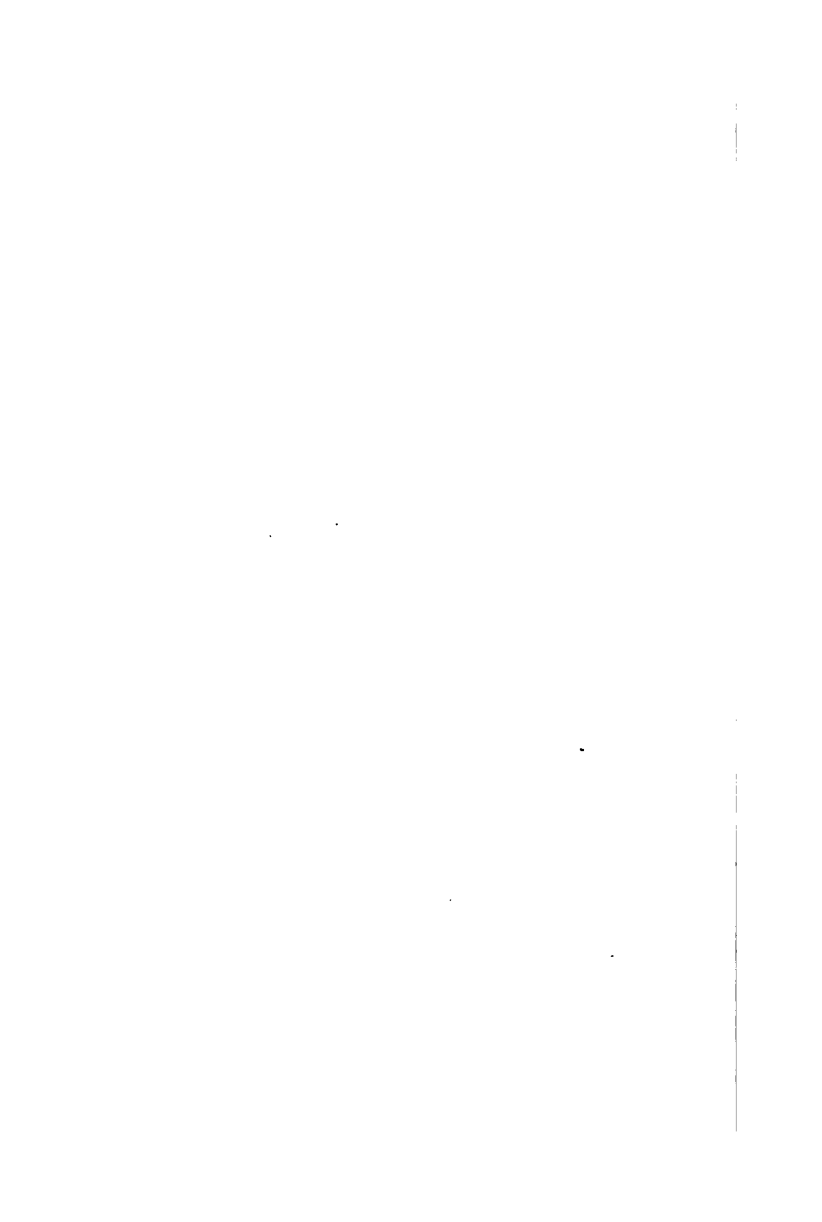
OR,

PASSION AND PATIENCE.



—❖—  
BY MISS STRICKLAND.

—❖—  
LONDON:  
THOMAS DEAN AND CO., THREADNEEDLE-STREET.  
—  
1844.



THE  
HISTORY OF A FIELD-MOUSE.

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“WHAT is my little Alfred crying for? asked his mother, Mrs. Clifford, as she entered the room where Alfred stood weeping by the table.

“Has any one hurt you, Alfred?”

“No, mamma,” he sobbed out at length.

“Then you must be a very naughty boy, to cry for nothing: come here, and tell me what is the matter with you.”

Alfred slowly advanced towards

his mother, and wiped away his tears with her apron. Alfred was but a little boy, or he would not have cried for such a simple thing as he did.

“ Well, Alfred, and what is it?” asked his kind mamma.

“ Why, mamma, you know that nice plum cake you gave me for saying my lesson well; I put it in the cupboard, as I did not want to eat it then, and I came just now to take a little nibble at it; when, as I opened the closet-door to look for it, there was an ugly brown mouse in the closet, and hardly a scrap of my cake left; that greedy thing had eaten it all but a few crumbs.” And here Alfred’s tears flowed afresh.

I am very sorry, my dear child, that the mouse has eaten your cake; but still I do not think it was worth shedding so many tears about: you must learn to bear such trifling disappointments with more patience. I dare say the mouse has eaten a great deal of my sugar and cakes, but yet I shall not cry if he has."

"I am sure it is enough to make any one cry," said Alfred. "I only wish," added he, his eyes sparkling with anger, "that I could have killed the little beast for stealing my cake; I should not mind half so much, if I could but be revenged on it."

"Now, Alfred, I am ashamed of you," said his mother gravely.

Alfred could, however, think of

nothing but the loss of his cake, and begged his mother to let the mouse-trap be set, to catch the mischievous intruder.

Mrs. Clifford was very sorry to hear her little son talk so, and she represented to him his cruelty in wanting to take away the life of a poor mouse, only for having satisfied its hunger.

“But, mamma, mice do a deal of mischief,” said Alfred, “and ought to be killed; for that mouse will soon eat up all your sugar.”

“But, Alfred, I know a certain two-legged mouse, who, if I left the key in my store-closet, would eat more sugar in one minute than this poor little animal could in an hour. Have I not caught a blue

eyed mouse at my sugar-bason with his mouth full?"

Alfred hung his head; for it was but a day or two before that his mother detected him with his hands in the sugar-dish, at her closet; and then she had pardoned him on his promising never to do so again.

"Alfred," said his mother, "you should always be just in whatever you do, and bear in mind what I teach you in your catechism—*to do unto others as you would be done unto yourself.*" Now would you be so unjust as to kill the mouse for what you have done so lately yourself?"

Alfred was obstinately bent on having the poor mouse killed.

"Then, Alfred I ought to have



killed you for stealing and eating my sugar."

"But, mamma, I am not a mouse, you know."

"More shame for you! remember, that poor little creature did not know it was acting wrong: but you did, because you have so often been told it was wicked to steal."

Alfred seemed much disturbed in mind at his mother's reproof, and took the earliest opportunity of leaving the room.

Mrs. Clifford was much grieved that her little Alfred showed an inclination to be cruel and revengeful,—two qualities so dangerous in a child, or in any one; and she knew that, unless it was timely checked, it would grow into a habit.

Harsh means she did not like to adopt; and so she at last thought of a method which seemed likely to succeed.

She was well aware of the inconvenience of having mice in her cupboard, as they not only commit great depredations, but soil every thing they touch; so, as she was forced to kill the mouse, she hoped to turn its death to a good use.

Therefore, the next time Alfred entered the room, she asked him if he was still resolved to have the mouse killed.

“ Yes, mamma,” said Alfred; “ it had no right to eat my cake.”

“ Very well; I will have the mouse-trap set; but observe, Alfred, whether before the day is past,

you do not tell me you are sorry for its death."

"Oh! no; that I am sure I shan't," replied Alfred; and Mrs. Clifford ordered the trap to be set.

Early the next morning, when Mrs. Clifford came down stairs and went to the closet, she beheld her poor little prisoner dead in his wire cage.

"See, Alfred," said she, "here is the poor mouse dead!"

Alfred at first was glad; but when he saw what a pretty one it was, he was sorry; but contented himself by saying to the dead mouse, "If you had not been in the cupboard doing so much mischief, you would not have been killed!"

When he had said his lessons,

his mother said to him, "Now, Alfred, shall I tell you a story?"

Alfred was very fond of hearing a story, if it was not too long; and he asked his mother if this would be a long one.

"I don't wish to tire you," said his mother, "so I will only tell you part of it this morning."

Alfred fetched his little stool, and having placed it at her side, fixed his eyes on his mother's face while she related

THE

HISTORY OF A FIELD MOUSE.

"In a wheat-stack, in Farmer Ball's yard, lived an old mouse with her family, consisting of five

little ones; the most worthy of which was a pretty brown mouse, called Downy, because her fur was longer and softer than either of her brothers' and sisters'; and besides being the prettiest, she was likewise the wittiest and best among them.

“ Her mother was by birth a field mouse; she had been carried among the sheaves of wheat into the stack, with a great many more field mice; and had lived there, at the expense of Farmer Ball, ever since.

“ It was one fine clear morning, in the middle of March, that, as Downy was peeping her little nose out of the straw at the edge of the stack, to breathe a little fresh air, she saw the farmer with his men,

enter the yard, and heard him tell the people that he would have the stack taken into the barn and threshed, and desire them to bid Fen, the rat-catcher, come, and bring all his dogs with him.

“ Poor Downy was in a terrible fright at hearing this; she ran to acquaint her mother with it, and asked her what they had best do; but her mother, who was but a foolish mouse, bade her not be under the least alarm, for she was persuaded the farmer did not mean to take it in just then; and added, it was time enough to think of it when the men began. She told Downy to go to bed with the rest of her brothers and sisters, and not be afraid.

“ But poor Downy was in great trouble about what she should do, and could not sleep for thinking of the sad fate that threatened them; she awakened her companions to consult with them; but her sisters only laughed at her fear, and said, they would never leave a place where they were so well off; and where they could get plenty of good corn, only for the trouble of eating it.

“ Her brothers were of the same opinion, and added, they could run so swiftly, they were sure they could soon get away into the field; but they expected they should live very quietly for some time.

“ Poor foolish little things! they did not think the danger was so

near; but they were awakened the next morning by the farmer's men unroofing the stack, and they now wished they had hearkened to the prudent advice of their sister Downy.

“ Poor little Downy's heart almost died within her, when she heard the barking of the dogs, and the halloing of the men; how much rather would she have been in the field, than in the warm stack! for she heard the men drawing near to the place where they lay; and they were all terribly afraid: and their mother, the old mouse, would go to see how far the danger was from them. Imprudent creature! she ventured too near; for a great black dog on the top of the stack,



the moment the men raised the sheaf where she was, snapped her up in an instant.

“ Nothing was now to be heard but shrieks and cries from every side of the stack; and the men drew nearer and nearer: Downy heard the last cries of her brethren; the sheaf where she had taken refuge, was already on the point of being raised, when she sprang through an opening in the side, and was just going to run down, when she beheld a great dog directly under her!

“ Poor Downy gave herself up as lost, and awaited in trembling anxiety her fate: for some moments she clung to the outside of the stack, not daring to descend, yet fearing

still more to stay; when, luckily for our poor little mouse, some one called the dog, who instantly ran off; and Downy, darting from the stack, had just time to gain a place of security beneath a clod of earth, where she lay shaking with fear, not daring to look up for some minutes.

“ She shuddered with horror when she heard the dying cries of her friends in the stack, and the shouts of the men encouraging the dogs. Many a poor mouse did she see running away, in hopes of making its escape, but pursued and devoured by the dogs.

“ Several times poor Downy had like to have been discovered by the dogs, or crushed beneath the horses’ feet; but she crouched very close to

the ground, and lay so still, she hardly breathed, so great was her fear; at length she watched an opportunity, when no one was near, to quit her retreat, and ran with all the speed she could, not once daring to pause or look behind, till she gained the farmer's orchard; where she lay among the long grass, panting, and half dead with terror and fatigue; she hid herself toward night under the roots of an old apple tree; for she was very much afraid of a great white owl which she had seen flying near.

“ Little Downy's timid heart beat with affright; every noise she heard, the very shaking of the dead leaves, filled her with alarm, and seemed to her the footsteps of an enemy.

“ It was in vain for her to lament the sad fate of her mother and brethren, she could not recal them to life; and Downy was thankful that she had escaped so well: but the cold weather was not yet gone, and poor little Downy knew she had nothing to eat and no warm house to live in, but must make herself one; and was afraid she should be starved to death with hunger, or perish with cold.

“ These thoughts occupied her mind, till she fell asleep; nor did she awake next morning till quite late, and found herself very hungry.

“ She first peeped out of her hole, and seeing nothing near to hurt her, she ventured forth in search of

some food; she rummaged among the dead leaves for some time, without success, till chance led her to a row of nut-trees; here, after a diligent search, she had the good fortune to discover three nuts, one of which she eat, being very hungry, and the rest she carried home to her tree, But Downy knew they would not last long, and so thought it best to try and get more; she therefore deposited these safely away, and set off to look out more provisions; she spent nearly the whole day among the nut-trees, but returned home with only one nut; and a shower of snow falling, she was forced to return to her dwelling; and did not go out any more that day, but lay quite still, and thought

how she should make herself a warm nest; for she was very cold here, having been used to the close warm stack, where scarcely any air entered.

“ She ate very sparingly of her nuts, saving as much as possible for the morrow, fearing lest the snow should hinder her looking for more; but there had not fallen much; and in the morning, the sun coming out quite bright, melted it all; and Downy left her tree to look for something to line her nest with, and more nuts.

“ Food being the first object, she began to search for some, and was more fortunate than before, as she discovered several ears of corn, which had been blown by the wind

off the stack; she could scarcely credit her good fortune, when she beheld her store, and saw it all safely lodged in her granary.

“ Her next care was to line her nest; for this purpose, though it was very cold and frosty, she collected all the bits of dried moss and grass she could find, and carried them in her mouth to her new habitation; she nibbled off the fibres which hung to the roots of the tree, and with dried weeds, soon made her house quite comfortable.

“ She spent the remainder of the month of March, and the beginning of April, in laying up stores of provision, and in enlarging the inside of her house, and stowing away the corn she obtained.

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“ The spring began with some beautiful warm days, and every thing looked warm and gay; the crocusses were all in flower, and the primroses, and the snow-drops, with some early violets.

“ Downy was rejoiced when she saw the daisies in the orchard begin to show their white heads above the grass, and she took many a frisk out to enjoy the sunshine, and soon became quite happy and contented.

“ One fine evening, as she was returning to her house, she saw a creature much like a weasel, only somewhat smaller, which she knew to be a mousehunt, by what she had heard of them: he was prowling along close by her tree, in hopes of



catching her; he smelt about for some time, and at last went in.

“ Poor little Downy was in a sad fright; she knew not what to do, for she saw his head peeping out of her hole, and his cunning black eyes prying in every direction.”

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Here Mrs. Clifford paused; and Alfred (who had listened with great attention) asked why she did not go on.

“ Because, Alfred, I do not wish to tire you by telling you any more: you are not fond of long stories.”

“ Yes, mamma; but do go on now, for I want to hear whether that nasty mousehunt killed poor Downy,” said Alfred.

“To be sure, Alfred,” said his mother, “you cannot be at all interested in the story of *a nasty brown mouse*?”

“Yes, mamma, but this was such a pretty one, you know, and I want to hear the rest.”

“No, Alfred, I will not tell you any more this morning; in the afternoon, if you are very good, I will tell you the rest.”

Alfred tried all he could to persuade her, but Mrs. Clifford would not relent, and Alfred sat silent some time, and was rather sullen; at length he said, “Mamma, the mouse eat my cake yesterday; will you give me another?”

“I thought you killed the mouse, Alfred, for eating it,—did you not?”

“ Yes, but I had not any more cake,” said he, pouting.

“ No, you said you did not mind the loss of your cake, so you could but be revenged on the thief; but you did not find killing it brought you another cake,—did it, Alfred?”

“ No, mamma,” replied the little boy; “ I will never kill another mouse.” And Alfred then went out to play in the garden, having first obtained his mamma’s promise to finish the rest of the story in the afternoon.

Accordingly, as soon as dinner was over, Alfred came and asked his mother to tell him the remainder of the story. His mother instantly complied with his request, and went on as follows:—

“ When Downy saw the mouse-hunt take possession of her house, she knew she must not venture near it again.”

“ Pray, mamma,” said Alfred, laying his hand on his mother’s arm, “ what sort of a creature is a mouse-hunt? Can you tell me?”

“ Yes, my dear child; as near as I can, I will tell you all that I know of them.

“ A mousehunt is a little animal of the species of weasel; it has a very slender body, about the length of a rat, with a long hairy tail, bushy at the end; the back is of a reddish brown colour; the hair long and smooth; the belly is white, as are also its feet; it runs very swiftly, swaying its body as it moves along,

from side to side; the head is short and narrow, with small ears, like those of a rat; the eyes are black, piercing, and very bright; their chief food is rats, mice, young chickens, little birds, and eggs. They are very destructive in the farm-yards, and in rabbit-warrens; they find out the burrows of the wild rabbits, and destroy the young ones, first gnawing off the head, and then sucking the blood out of the body; for scarce any of that sort of animals eat the flesh of their prey.

“ They likewise kill the young pheasants and partridges, and suck their eggs. They frequent mole-hills, and are often caught in the traps set for the moles; they are

destroyed by ferrets and dogs, who are great enemies to the whole race, and hunt and kill them wherever they find them.

“ These mousehunts live, for the most part, in holes beneath the roots of trees, such as the blackthorn and willow, or in old buildings.

“ The female mousehunt pulls the down off her breast, the same as the rabbit does, and makes a warm bed for her young; she has from four to eight at a time, who are born blind and without fur, like little rabbits. And this is all I know of mousehunts.”

Alfred thanked his mother, and begged her to go on; which she instantly did.

“ Poor Downy was in great dis-

tress, as to where she should pass the night securely; at last she found a hole in the bank, and into this she crept, though much alarmed for fear of her enemy's discovering her. She dared not go to sleep at all that night; nor did she stir out next day till forced by hunger to seek her food. She did not see any thing of the mousehunt; but she resolved to leave the orchard, and seek a safer spot for a new habitation.

“ Accordingly, next day, she set off to look for a proper situation. She passed through the orchard-hedge into a beautiful green meadow, all covered with daisies, red clover, cowslips, and golden buttercups.

“ Here Downy resolved to find a

place to live in, and she whisked about under the tall heads of the cowslips and buttercups; at last she fixed on a little green mound, such a one as you, Alfred, call a fairy's throne; and here she began to scratch with her fore feet, till she had made a little opening in the turf; and she used such diligence, that before night she had made a hole large enough to sleep in; and though it was not lined, or so warm as her house under the old apple tree, yet she slept so sound that she never woke till the sun was risen quite high in the heavens.

“Downy jumped up in a hurry when she saw how late it was: the birds had been up hours before her, and were all busily employed build-



ing their nests; every bush resounded with the songs of these innocent little creatures while at work, and Downy knew she must not be idle, for she had much to do. Being very hungry, she first went to an oak which grew at some little distance, and here she found plenty of acorns among the leaves,—of these she made a hearty meal, and carried some to where she was at work.

“ With a great deal of care and labour she dug her house, and made it quite round and smooth as she went on, carrying it in a slanting direction along the hollow side of the hill.

“ It cost poor Downy many a long day’s hard work before her house was completed, and many a

weary nibble before she had finished lining the inside of it.

“ Her next care was to make a secure room for stowing away her winter stores; for this purpose, she made an opening on one side of her first room, and carried a passage along some little distance; and then formed her store chamber, which she was a long time making, but it was at length completed perfectly to her own satisfaction, having rendered it a most convenient granary.

“ She had now nothing to do but find food for herself, and play; but Downy never came home without bringing something useful for her house, either a bit of straw or hay, a little tuft of moss, or the dried

stalk of a flower; these she cut with her teeth into small pieces, and laid in her nest to make it soft and warm.

“ Downy was now quite happy; her mound was all covered with flowers, fine cowslips, and buttercups, and a tuft of daisies grew close to the entrance of her house, and served to hide it from the eyes of owls, mousehunts, or any of the enemies to poor mice; and Downy thought herself secure from danger.

“ On a beautiful moonlight night she used just to peep out from under the daisies, and look at the dew drops all shining like diamonds in the moon beams; and once she whisked on the top of her green mound, and began to play among

the flowers; but she was alarmed by the sight of a small dog running through the high grass, and she quickly retreated into her house; nor was she so imprudent again as to venture out after it was dark.

“ And now the grass grew long and high, the flowers began to lose their beauty, and turn brown; every thing proclaimed the approach of summer.

“ The month of June began, and the mowers came to cut down the grass; Downy was fearful that they would molest her, and spoil her house, when they came near the little mound, but she trusted to the chance that they might not discover it, and she laid quite close all day.

“ But poor little Downy was very sorry to see all the nice high grass and pretty flowers cut down to the ground; those flowers which had sheltered her from the sun and rain so long.

“ ‘ And now, ’ thought she, ‘ I shall certainly be caught by the great white owl; for he will be able to see me now; and I can’t hide myself under the long grass and dandelions, as I used to do, for they are all cut down and spoiled.’ ”

“ Pray mamma,” said Alfred, “ do owls really eat mice? I should hardly think they could catch them; for they are not like cats, or mousehunts, you know.”

“ And yet, Alfred, though they are not like cats or mousehunts in

form, they live on mice, and indeed are of quite as much use in destroying this sort of vermin, as cats."

"Will you tell me, dear mamma, all you know about the owls?" asked Alfred.

"With a deal of pleasure, my dear boy," replied his mother:—"There exist a great many different species of owls; but the white, the tawny, and the brown, are the most common sorts.

"Now Downy's enemy was (as I before said) a great white owl, the most common of any. They live during the greatest part of the year in barns, granaries, hay-lofts, and other out-houses; and are of great use to the farmers in clearing those places of mice.

“ They never quit their retreats till dusk, as they cannot bear the light, but sit in the darkest holes they can find till evening, when they sally forth in quest of prey.

“ They fly round the fields till they discover it, and then drop instantly down, and bear it away in their talons.

“ They also build their nests in the eaves of churches, in old ruinous buildings, and in hollow trees.

“ Whilst the young are in the nest, the father and mother go out alternately in quest of food for them, beating the fields like spaniels.

“ They continue their care of their young till after they can fly and shift for themselves; and it is quite surprising the immense num-

ber of mice they catch to supply them with food. They lay, in general, four or five eggs.

The barn owls do not hoot, but hiss and make a disagreeable noise like snoring, and will scream most dismally while flying along; they have a beautiful circle of soft white feathers round their eyes and beak, which is strong and hooked; the legs are clothed with feathers down to the feet, and the toes are covered with short hair; the claws are very sharp.

“ This sort of owls are not entirely white, as the shafts of the lower feathers of the wings are grey, and sometimes of a pale buff; the tail is likewise barred with a sort of dusky grey colour.



“ The tawny, or screech owl, differs in colour; it is handsomer, and considerably larger than the common white owl, its neck is of a fine buff, powdered over with blackish spots; it is much harder than the other sorts: the young owlets will eat any kind of dead meat which may be brought to them; the little barn owlets, on the contrary, must have a constant supply of fresh food. .

“ And are the little owls pretty, mamma?” asked Alfred; “ I should like to see one.”

“ I am sure, Alfred, you would, for they look just like balls of swans’-down, when they are fledged, and they have such fine black eyes, which look so cunning, peeping

from under the soft white ruff of feathers round their heads.

“ When I was a little girl, and was staying on a visit in Kent, at my uncle Reed’s, one of his men brought in a large tawny owl, which they had disturbed in the barn; and not being able to bear the glare of the day-light, it was easily caught; and my cousin Mark kept it in a large hamper in the root house in the garden; where he used to feed it on raw flesh, rats, and mice, and, if he could get nothing else, on bats and other birds: but the owl never would eat before us, and if we opened the lid of the hamper in the day-time, or held a candle to him of a night, he instantly threw himself on his back, shrieking and

hissing at us till his house was again shut up in darkness: he was very savage and fierce at first, but Mark soon tamed him, and at the end of two months' time, he would fly out of a night and get his own living.

“ He was so used to his shed, that he never failed to return to his old habitation, sitting perched up on a beam in the darkest corner all day, and going out as soon as it was dusk; and, indeed, he made a sad noise of a night, and used to screech most dismally.

“ One day, we were a little surprised, on going to pay our owl a visit, to discover a companion sitting by his side; and a few days after, we missed our favorite en-

tirely from his home; nor could we think what had become of him.

“ But one day, about a fortnight after, Mark came running in to us quite out of breath, and told us he had found the owl, and that he had got a nest full of nice soft white owlets in a great hollow tree at the bottom of the garden.

“ You may be sure, Alfred, we ran as fast as we could to the tree, and soon discovered the little ones by the hissing noise we heard; and at last saw some round white heads nestling among the ivy; for Mark lifted us up one by one to peep into the nest, which was in a hole in the tree, not very far from the ground. We went to see them every day, but unfortunately I left my uncle's

house before the little owlets were able to shift for themselves, so I do not know what became of them.

“ There is one thing more, my little Alfred, that I have to tell you about them:—It sometimes happens that an owl is disturbed from its haunts during the day-time, and forced to fly in the light, which they can hardly do, their eyes being so formed that they can only see in the dark and shade, and are completely dazzled in the day-light. When this is the case, all the small birds of every sort flock round him uttering their cries of dislike, and mimicking him, follow him, chattering as if in contempt; whilst the poor owl, half blinded by the unusual

glare of light, flies with the greatest difficulty, surrounded by those little creatures, who toward the close of the day tremble at his presence, and dare not approach him.

“ The owl will often stand still on the bough of a tree, and sinking his head among the feathers of his breast, appear weary and stupified by their noise; while the birds, conscious that their enemy can do them no harm, gather round and continue to tease and persecute him till he is forced to seek some safe retreat in the dark, where they dare not approach to molest him.”

Little Alfred was well entertained by his mother's account of the owls; and he promised to remember all she told him: and Mrs. Clifford

again went on with the history of Downy.

“ Poor little Downy was in a great fright all the time that the hay-makers were at work, and when she found them coming near her house, with their great pitchforks in their hands, she remembered the fate of her mother, and all her brothers and sisters in the stack, and she thought that she would be safer in the bank of the garden-hedge, which was not far off.

“ She watched an opportunity when no one was looking, and hastened away to the hedge as fast as she could; and creeping in, lay quite snug; she remained in the bank the whole day, and enjoyed herself more than could be expected,

for the weather was extremely pleasant, and there was a bed of ripe wild strawberries close by, which smelt quite refreshing.

“Though Downy dared not venture back into the field for fear of being killed, (for mice are but timid little things) yet she was very happy all that day; and when she saw the men leave the field with the pitchforks, which had caused her so much terror, she returned to her nest and slept that night on some new hay which she had nibbled, and brought into her house to lay on.

“As soon as it was day, away ran careful Downy to the bank; she peeped through the hedge, and saw every thing in the garden looking very pleasant.



“ So Miss Downy thought she should like to spend the day in the beautiful shady garden; in she went, and soon found it as charming as it looked; for the garden abounded in plenty of good things; there were peas, and beans, and potatoes, and young carrots, and beds of ripe red strawberries.

“ Downy did nothing but eat and enjoy herself the whole day, and did not think of returning home that day, nor for many days afterwards, for she said to herself—‘ What occasion is there for me to go back to the meadow, where I have so much trouble to get food, while here is more than I could ever eat, and I have no trouble in getting it at all,—and I am sure no mischief will happen to me here!’

“ So she gave no thought of her nice house in the field, but amused herself by eating all day long; till she grew quite fat, and Downy thought she was happier than ever she had been in the field; and she grew very indolent, for she now began to think that there was no occasion for her to work; but she said to herself, she would play all day; and here she showed herself to be a very simple little mouse, as it proved in what befel her.

“ She had been living in the garden for nearly a month, when, one fine sun-shiny day, she had ventured nearer to the house than usual, and was lying reposing herself in the sun, by a clod of dirt, near a rain-water-butt, when she

was disturbed by a noise near her, and to her horror she beheld the black cat with a fine kitten by her side, proceeding down the walk where she lay; to escape was almost impossible, even the attempt was vain, and hapless Downy gave herself up for lost.

“A month back, and she might have trusted to her own speed for escaping—but, alas! Downy had so long been used to do nothing but eat and enjoy herself, that she was no longer able to run as swiftly as she used to do; she dared not even move a step, but sat in an agony of hopeless despair.

“Downy now lamented her folly in having left her safe retreat in the meadow: what would she now have

given to have been in her own little house under the mole-hill? and she bitterly regretted ever having been tempted to quit it; for there no cats ever came, and there she had ever lived in innocence and happiness; whilst now she was doomed to fall a victim to the merciless claws of a hungry cat, who would devour her alive! She lay breathless; not a limb did she move; for the cat approached within a yard of the spot where she lay, and——”

“Oh! poor Downy!” cried Alfred, “how sorry I am,—but mamma, did that wicked cat kill her? dear mamma, do make haste and tell me!”

“Why, Alfred,” said his mother; “you would not wait for me to tell you whether she was killed

or not: I am sure you could not feel sorry for the death of *a nasty brown mouse*. You hate mice, they are such little thieves."

Little Alfred blushed at what his mother said; for he remembered they were his own words—and said to his mother: "Dear mamma, I think I will never wish for the death of any thing again, and I am very sorry I had the mouse killed: I will never kill another, if it were to eat all the cakes you mean to give me when I am good."

Mrs. Clifford could not help smiling at her little boy, and she kissed his forehead, and then went on.

"The cat, as I said before, was close to the clod of earth on which luckless Downy stood; and when

she believed her death certain, she had the inexpressible joy of finding that her motionless posture had been the means of saving her from the vigilant eyes of the cat, who passed on quite unconcerned without taking any notice of her prey.

“ For an instant, Downy could scarce credit her own eyes when she saw her enemies pass on; but fearing that if puss should return, she should not again escape so miraculously, she darted away, as she hoped, unseen; but, silly little thing! she had better have stayed where she was, for the kitten saw her as she ran, and sprung upon her! Poor Downy felt her claws; but exerting all her speed, she flew to the hedge, that friendly hedge, which had so

often been her refuge; and darting among the tangled roots of the hawthorn and ivy, left her pursuers far behind; and, exhausted with terror and fatigue, remained trembling and panting, till she was half dead. Still she heard the mews of the disappointed kitten, and the angry purrs of the old cat—who sat watching above the bank for more than an hour, waiting to seize her if she ventured forth;\* but that poor

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\* The above-mentioned circumstance, improbable as it may appear, I myself was witness to in the garden not many paces from the door of the house; when the poor little mouse actually escaped the eyes of a cat and her kitten, who passed within a yard of the spot where it stood, by standing in that motionless

Downy was not in a condition to do; for her poor back still ached with the bruise the kitten had given her, and she felt in such a panic, she could not have stirred a step, if she had seen a dozen cats.

“ For two whole days, poor little Downy thought she should had died; and when she was a little better and began to feel hungry, there was nothing for her to eat but hay-seeds and dry leaves, or the roots of the trees; and Downy, who had of late been used to such good fare, could not bear to eat such dry unpalatable food as this was.

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manner on the top of a clod of earth; nor was it discovered till it left its station; and though caught by the kitten, yet it finally escaped unhurt to the garden-hedge.



“ When she used to spend her time in labour and industry, she ate the hardest fare with an excellent appetite, and was thankful and contented with the least bit of any thing she got: but now she turned away disgusted at the coarse food, and it was not until pinched by hunger, that she would eat any of it.

“ And now Downy began to consider within herself, whether it would not have been much better and wiser, for her to have returned back to her own house in the meadow, instead of living so long in idleness and luxury; and Downy found that idleness brings its own punishment sooner or later; for had she been at home, she would not have been so frightened by the cat,

or nearly killed by the kitten; or even if a cat had come near her nice nest, she would have run away much faster than she did now, for being then smaller and thinner, she was much nimbler.

“ Nor was her daintiness the less evil attending her long indulgence; and this she felt more severely, now she was ill, and could not go out to find good food; she had suffered so much from pain and terror, that she resolved never to go into the garden again, excepting to get provisions when in want.

“ With a sad and penitent heart, Downy once more returned to her old habitation: but alas! what was her grief on beholding it a complete ruin! her nice warm nest all de-

stroyed, and the pretty green mound quite spoiled!

“Downy was sadly vexed, for the cruel hay-makers had with their pitchforks torn open the turf, and scattered her soft bed all round on the grass. She stood gazing with anguish on the desolate scene before her; here was all her spring work entirely ruined, and now she was ill, and had no where to lay her head. ‘Ah!’ thought she, ‘if I had not spent so much time in doing nothing but eat and play, I should have escaped the danger of being caught by the cat, and should not have been hurt by the kitten; besides which, I should by this time have made up my nest, and been quite comfortable again.’

“ She was now hardly able to work, and what was far worse, she felt very great reluctance to begin her laborious task; so much harm had her living so long in indolence done her, as it does to every one who indulges in it.

“ Remember, my little Alfred, that idleness is the root of all evil, as you may see in the case of Downy. Now which do you think was the happiest and best: careful, industrious Downy, making her house, and busily procuring food for the winter; or, careless, idle Downy, doing nothing but play, and enjoying herself in the garden, eating the fruit and sleeping among the flowers? Now tell me, which do you like the best of the two?”

Alfred considered for a minute or two, and then said, "Why, dear mamma, though I should have liked to have eat the nice things in the garden, and lived among the flowers; yet I see that it would have been better for Downy if she had remained in the field and worked hard; but I am afraid, I should have been as silly as Downy, and not have liked to work."

"That is what I was afraid of; therefore, my dear, I thought it best to show you how wrong she was in indulging herself in that manner, And be assured, my dear Alfred, that whoever does, will be sure to fall into misfortune.

"Did not you find, Alfred," said his mother, "that when you left

your garden for more than a week without doing any thing in it, till it got all overrun with weeds, that every day you felt less inclined to work at it; till it got so bad, that you had not the heart to begin it at all."

"Yes, mamma," replied Alfred: "that is true, for when I had my new humming-top, I did nothing but spin it for a whole week, and I forgot my garden, and I saw the weeds grow longer every day, and I said to myself 'I can pull them to-morrow;' but then I hated to work whilst I could play, and so it got on worse and worse; and I felt so idle, I could not begin it; and so, you know, I drove it off from day to day, till I went one day to ga-

ther some flowers, and found them all choked with weeds and spoiled, and I felt so vexed; but I did not think it was of any use doing any thing to my garden, as all my flowers were spoiled; so I let it go, mamma, till you were angry with me, said I should never have another, and threatened to take it away from me if I did not put it in order and keep it neat. Now, mamma, was not I like Downy then?"

"Why, Alfred, it was something in the same way, I must own; but remember, it is never too late to be good again; and the sooner one begins, the better; so, the same as working in your garden, you will drive it off from day to day, till like the weeds, your faults will over-

run and cover all your good qualities; and then you will find twice the trouble you would otherwise have. Do you understand me, Alfred, and know what I mean?"

"Yes, mamma, I think I do; you mean, if I am as idle in making myself a good boy, as I was in pulling the weeds out of my garden, I shall never grow good,—don't you?"

"Yes, Alfred dear; and if you do not begin in time, your faults will grow into such a habit, that you will have as much trouble in correcting them, as Downy had in overcoming her indolent disposition."

Mrs. Clifford would have talked longer to Alfred, but he was so impatient to hear how Downy got on in making her new house, that, he



begged her to go on, and his mother once more resumed her story.

“Necessity obliged Downy, at last, to overcome her extreme reluctance to work; and she once more began to look out for a proper place for her new habitation; she visited all the green mounds in the meadow; but, alas! they were occupied by the ants; and poor Downy was quite out of patience; and at last she was, though with great reluctance, forced to take up her lodgings in the side of the garden bank, quite at the farther end, where no cats ever came: here, finding it really was to her own interest to work, she resolved not to be idle any more, but labour as hard as ever she had done, and she soon completed

her new dwelling, making a most commodious habitation, in which she lived happily all the summer.

“When the harvest time arrived, then was Downy very busy; she went into a neighbouring wheat-field—a good harvest for herself—and laid in a handsome store of grain for her winter supply.

“In her journeys to the corn-fields, she met many mice, who, like her, were gathering in their stock of provisions; but Downy would not stay in the corn-fields, because she remembered the fate of her nest while she was gone in the garden; so she came home very regularly every night.

“Nothing of any consequence happened to Miss Downy till the

latter end of the Autumn; for some days she had missed her provisions, but could not account for it in any way; and was at a loss to know who it could be who devoured the fruits of her daily labours; but one morning, when she returned from gleanings in the stubblefields, she was greatly surprised, on entering her house, to behold a young stranger busily employed in breakfasting in her granary; she stopped at the entrance of her house to examine her visitor, and was struck by the beauty of his form; he was of a reddish colour, his hair very long and thick, his breast and fore feet of a pale buff, and his belly white; he had a nice round face and fine oval ears, with quick lively brown eyes,

and long handsome black whiskers; in short, he was the prettiest mouse Downy had ever seen, though he was a sad little thief, and had eaten a great deal of her wheat.

“He appeared, at first, much disconcerted at being disturbed and discovered in his depredations, and looked round on every side for an opening to escape at; but none appearing, he stood still, and scratched his ear with one of his hind feet, assuming as unconcerned an air as he could possibly put on.

“Downy was not sorry she had discovered who was the thief; but she soon forgave him, though she could not help thinking he was a very dishonest mouse to come every day and rob her as he had done; but he

was so pretty, and made so humble an apology for his intruding into her house, that she could not find it in her heart to be angry with him long, and they soon became very good friends; and at last he proposed her taking him as a partner, which the simple Downy agreed to without hesitation, and shared her house and provisions with the handsome young stranger, who behaved with great decorum for some time, and was very careful to mind what little Downy said to him; but at last he began to throw off his restraint, and was often getting into mischief, in spite of the sage advice of Downy, who took great pains to warn him from such evil practices. But Silket would frisk in the gar-


den, robbing the newly-planted bean and pea crops, with the greatest audacity; not minding what careful Downy said, who represented to him the danger he ran of being killed by cats, or by the mousehunts, or caught in traps;—but Silket, like a naughty mouse that he was, only laughed and made light of her fears; and when at last she appeared vexed at his disobedience, he promised never to go into the garden again; but, like many more, broke his promise directly he was out of her sight; and besides this, he was sadly idle, and was, I am sorry to say, much fonder of play than work; and Downy was obliged to remonstrate with him on such bad behaviour, and said—‘Silket, how can-

you expect me to work for both you and myself? you are a sad partner.'

"Silket was very humble, and promised to be more industrious for the future; and that very afternoon he ransacked a new crop of peas, which the gardener had sown that day, and came home laden with spoils; next day, he brought home a hoard of nuts from the garden, and Downy thought if he would but continue so good, she should be very happy, for her Silket was a pretty creature, and she was very fond of him.

"But pretty creatures are not always the best, as she found to her cost, for when the weather set in cold, Mr. Silket refused to work, or stir out of the house, but lay rolled

round like a ball in the soft hay, and slept, only just getting up to eat, and Downy was much grieved, for she feared their stock of food would never last out the winter, if he did not help her to make some addition to it; but Silket begged her not to be under any concern, for there was plenty for them both; and on her again expressing her fears on the subject, he gave her two or three bites on the ear, and squeaked most vehemently; showing his anger at being found fault with, and then laid down again with a sulky air of displeasure; while poor Downy, almost broken-hearted, slowly and full of sorrow, left her house and wandered along the side of the bank, quite disconso-





late, and she resolved never to go back again to her ungrateful husband, who had treated her so unkindly, but leave him in a quiet possession of her dwelling.

“Simple little Downy! she might have known before-hand how he would have treated her, as she was so well acquainted with his propensity to stealing; and she was a very foolish mouse to take for a partner one who showed, from the first, that he liked better to play about and steal, than labour to get an honest living. Downy ought to have considered all this; but she thought him so pretty, that she forgot all his misdeeds, and very imprudently shared her food and house with him. It is true, that he promised

very fair, and said he would work for her, and that she should have nothing to do but just to eat, and sleep and play; (and Downy, who did not think that such a pretty soft creature could tell so many stories) believed all he said; and this was the consequence of her imprudence.

“So you see, Alfred, that we must not always judge from appearances, because I know rather a pretty creature, with great blue eyes, who, like Silket, can steal and tell fibs, and who likes to play better than learn a lesson and read.”

Alfred coloured up, for he knew all along that his mother meant that he was like Silket; he felt a little ashamed, and did not make any an-

swer; and his mother continued her story.

“Poor little Downy laid bewailing her sad misfortune on the cold, damp grass, determining never to go home to her little tyrant again, so angry was she at his cruel conduct.—‘Ah! foolish mouse that I was,’ (said she,) ‘why did I not continue to live by myself when I was so happy! I might have known how he would have behaved to me, but I will never return to him; he may enjoy by himself that food which he loves so much more than he does me, ungrateful that he is!’

In this manner, she was uttering her complaints, when she heard a soft padding step behind her, and a mournful noise made her turn round;

and she beheld her penitent Silket, (for it was him) who advancing with a sorrowful air, humbly besought her forgiveness, and rubbed his velvet cheek in an imploring manner against hers; his lively brown eyes were now troubled, and very sorrowful. Downy could not resist his beseeching looks, but forgave him for all his past offences, and took him once more into favour, on his promising to be good in future, and never bite her ears or tail again.

“Silket was really very sorry for his late bad behaviour, and he resolved to be very good, and do so no more, for he did love Downy very much, though he loved himself better. He accompanied her home with great affection, and

they were happier for some weeks than they had ever been before; he was so attentive and kind, and seemed to study only to please her; he spent day after day in searching among the dry leaves in the garden for filberts; and when he could not procure any thing else, he brought her crocus-roots, out of the garden, and carrots.

“One evening, he had been out later than usual, he did not see Downy’s bright eyes looking out from among the ivy leaves and moss for his return, and he was fearful some ill had befallen her. As he approached the house, he thought he heard several little squeaking sounds, and on entering his nest, found that Downy in his absence

had become the mother of four little helpless blind mice, which she was suckling. Silket was overjoyed; he licked the little ones with much affection, and behaved with the greatest tenderness to Downy; he presented her with the filberts he had brought home, and praised the beauty of his family; though none but himself could see that they possessed any, for little mice are very ugly till they can open their eyes, and have got fur on them; for, like little puppies, and kittens, and rabbits, they are all born blind, and do not open their eyes for many days after.

“No mouse could behave better than Silket did; he would not suffer Downy to stir out in the cold on any account, for though it was the

latter end of March, the weather was unusually severe, and the frost very hard.

“Silket was out almost the whole day searching for nice food for Downy, and getting soft moss to keep his young ones warm.

“But, one day, he much grieved Downy, and did a deal of mischief—He wanted something to cover his little ones with, and what did he do, but went into the garden to the hedge where Mrs. Ball hung out her linen to dry, and the wicked Silket gnawed and bit one of the old lady’s aprons almost to pieces, carrying home as many of the rags as his mouth would hold, to his house.

“Downy was sadly vexed when

she heard what he had been doing, and she was forced to give him a long lecture on being so mischievous. while Mr. Silket amused himself by laying the rags out to the greatest advantage, admiring the white quilt he had brought home for his little ones' bed, and secretly resolving to go and fetch the remaining fragments; and though he saw how grave Downy looked, he did not think he had done so much harm, in biting the old lady's apron; so he cast a cunning eye at Downy, to see if she was observing him, for he wanted sadly to get the rest of the apron; only he did not like to disobey her commands, and get another scolding. But she saw what he was after, and begged him



not to go; for the said, she knew that such mischievous ways would come to no good end; and that he would get caught in a trap, or killed by some cat, or fall into some great danger; 'and,' added she, 'what should I do, Silket, left with these four helpless little mice to provide for?' Silket immediately saw the impropriety of his conduct; and he never spoiled any more of good Mrs. Ball's linen, though he often came in the way of it.

"The poor old lady was greatly disturbed at the misfortune which had befallen her best muslin apron, and threatened to have the rat-catcher's dogs and ferrets, to hunt the garden and the hedge, if any thing more was destroyed; so it was

a good thing that Silket took Downy's advice in that respect, or he would certainly have been killed for his pains.

“At the end of three weeks the little mice began to be quite lively, and to grow very pretty little creatures; they much resembled their father in their mischievous inclinations, and it needed all Downy's prudent management to keep them in order, for they would frisk out of their nest, and scud about in the meadow; going so far out of sight, and staying so late, that Downy was in a great fright lest any mishap should befall them; as to Silket, he seemed to take great delight in their pranks.

“They would lay on the bank,

enjoying themselves and basking in the sun, almost all day long. When it was fine weather, sometimes, one bolder than the rest, would run up a little tree, not more than a yard high, and clinging to the top, look down with triumph on his companions; then, if he heard the dead leaves shake, the timid little thing whisked down, and away they all four scudded, hiding themselves in the holes of the hedge, till they thought the danger past.

“Downy now began to feel the cares of a family, and she was often much grieved at the disobedient behaviour of the little mice. Velvet was the only good-behaved one, and she was bad enough in all reason.

“They were incorrigible little thieves, which quality they inherited from their father; for no sooner were their parents out of the way, than they found their way to the granary; and though Downy and Silket were all day busied in getting food for them, and fed them with the best of every thing, the wicked little things stole the corn, and eat even more than they wanted; they grew so fat, and sleek, and wanton, that all the field mice in the meadow declared they were quite spoiled, and Downy ought to keep them under more restraint, and punish them when they behaved ill.

“As they grew older, they grew worse; Downy had warned them of all the dangers in which they ran, by

down a bit of stick, which held the brick up—down it fell, and the hapless Whitefoot was crushed to death in an instant.

“ This was the effect of his disobedience to his mother.

“ The noise of the fallen brick alarmed the timid little mice; away they ran as fast as they could, nor did they once stop to look behind, to see what was become of their brother Whitefoot; who was found next morning by the gardener, under the brick, and was given to the black cat to eat.

“ Now, had he minded what his mother had told him the day before, he would have been alive and frisking about with the rest. See, Alfred, what comes of disobedience and greediness.”

“ Yes, mamma,” said Alfred, “ I will remember how poor Whitefoot was served, and not disobey you; though, you know, I could not be killed by a brick-trap, as he was.”

“ No, Alfred, but you may get hurt in a hundred different ways, by going where I bid you not; recollect when I had so often told you not to play with the fire, how you burnt your hand, by lighting bits of paper; and if I had not come in, you would have been burnt to death.”

“ Yes,” mamma, and it hurt me so much, I have never done it *since*.”

“ No more would Whitefoot have gone near a trap again, if he had

only broken one of his limbs, instead of being killed; but he should have minded what was said at first. And you shall hear how the others behaved after his death.

“ Downy was much shocked at the death of her poor Whitefoot, and she told the other little mice to take warning by their brother’s sad fate, and not go near any more brick-traps, but be contented with the food which she and their father provided for them. ’

“ This they promised to do, and they were very sorry for the loss of Whitefoot, who was the most nimble of them all, and at the head of all their pranks, for he was usually the ring-leader and the most daring of the party.

“ For a few days they were more orderly, but their bad habits returned again, and they forgot all their promises, and were as naughty as ever they had been; even Silket was shocked at them, and was forced to chastise the two most unruly, Wilful and Sprightly, by biting their ears.

“ Wilful ran away, and came to a most untimely death.—He invaded, one night, a bee-hive, and made great havoc in the stores of honey, eating the honey-combs, and destroying all the work of the poor bees; but, at last, he was punished severely; for the bees, enraged at his lawless conduct, came in a body, and stung their enemy in a thousand different



places; so that, unable to escape, he died in great agony."

"And did bees ever sting a mouse to death in that manner, mamma?" asked Alfred.

"Yes, Alfred, and if you are a good boy, I will read you a long account of bees, and how they build their cells, and make their wax and honey."

"But, mamma, there is nothing about their killing a mouse in it, is there?"

"Yes, my dear child, I will tell you all about it one day, but let me finish my story first."

"There were now only two young mice left, Sprightly and Velvet. Velvet was so shocked at the bad end to which her two brothers had come, that she resolved not to be

naughty again; but try by her good conduct to make amends for her thoughtless behaviour; but when she told Sprightly of her intentions. the wicked Sprightly ridiculed her, and said she should go and seek her fortune in the meadow and garden, where no one could scold her, and where she might do as she pleased: and with this resolution she set off, and they never saw her again; for having no house to go to, the white owl saw her as he was flying out one evening, and soon made an end of Miss Sprightly, who had better have staid at home with Velvet, and her father and mother.

“ Velvet was the comfort and pride of her parents; she helped them in all their labours, and assisted them in enlarging their

house, and providing food against the winter.

“ As she increased in goodness, she grew prettier; and every one admired her, she was so clean, and her skin was as soft as satin, and looked quite bright and glossy. Velvet was generally up and abroad before sunrise, and enjoyed being out in the dew; she always returned home loaded with grain; and they were all quite happy and comfortable; for Silket was very good, and Downy had nothing to make her uncomfortable, being blessed with a good husband, and a good daughter.

“ But a sad accident happened, which deprived poor Downy of all means of providing for her wants,

and gave Silket and Velvet the greatest pain and uneasiness on her account.

“ One day, Downy had been by herself in the garden, and in passing under a gooseberry-bush, she did not see a trap which had been set to catch little birds, and it caught one of her poor little feet, and she lay struggling in the greatest pain, and shrieking lamentably; at last, by a violent effort, she got loose, but with the loss of one of her fore-feet; sadly wounded, and crying piteously, she at last gained her house, and Silket and Velvet found her exhausted with pain, and almost dying; they were greatly grieved at the misfortune, and lamented bitterly the sad fate of poor Downy,

and they feared greatly lest they should lose her; but good nursing and great care at last restored her, in some measure; after which, Velvet and Silket would never permit her to go out to get food, but always brought the best for her; and she lived quite at her ease, only she never was so strong as before.

“ Velvet strove, by all the means in her power, to make her mother happy, that she might not feel her misfortune so severely; and she succeeded so well, that Downy became quite cheerful and contented, and never complained or repined at her lameness.

“ The summer passed happily away, but the sudden death of poor

Silket once more filled them with grief.

“The innocent little creature was sleeping under the nut-trees in the garden, one warm morning in September; he had been collecting nuts to carry home, but being tired, he laid down to repose himself in the sun, and unfortunately, fell asleep; nor did he wake till he found himself in the grasp of the merciless black cat, who springing upon her defenceless prey, strangled him in an instant. There was no fond Downy near, nor affectionate Velvet, to receive his last sighs, nor give him aid.

“The evening came, but no Silket returned to the disconsolate Downy; another day passed, but they saw

nothing of Silket; and they were at last certain that he must have been killed.

“ This heavy blow almost overcame Downy, and it was with the greatest difficulty that Velvet could persuade her to eat and be comforted; but every thing around them served to recal the image, and remind them of the loss, of their beloved Silket, and this gave them both great pain.

“ At last, Velvet, without saying any thing to her mother, stole away while she was asleep, and having found a pretty spot some way from farmer Ball's land, she made a new house, much more convenient than the one they then lived in.

“ It was a long time before it was completed, but when it was quite finished, and well stocked with grain, she brought Downy to see it. It was situated in a pretty garden, on a beautiful sloping green bank, under the shade of a fir-tree, not many yards from a nice white brick house, the front of which was covered with vines and wall-fruit; there were pots of balsams and geraniums, placed on the beds opposite the windows and glass door.”

“ Why, mamma,” exclaimed Alfred, suddenly looking up in his mother’s face, that was just like our garden, and our house;” and he ran to the window, and looked out into the garden, saying with great



vivacity, " Yes, mamma, it is the same; it is our garden with the fir-tree and bank, and all the flowers, exactly the same!" And he turned an enquiring eye unto his mother.

Mrs. Clifford smiled, but made no reply to his exclamations of surprise, and went on as if she had not heard him.

" In this quiet pretty spot they settled themselves, and Downy hoped to spend the rest of her days in quiet; she wanted for nothing, for Velvet provided for all her wants.

" Downy thought, if she should ever be deprived of her, it would break her heart, and she must soon be starved to death; as she could not work now, as she had done formerly.

“ These thoughts made her often very sorrowful, and Velvet thought she seemed to droop, and lose her spirits and appetite; so Velvet thought to get something nice to please her; she stole into the house, one day, when nobody saw her, and after some little time, she found her way into the cupboard, where she smelt something very nice, and beheld a new plum-cake. ‘ Ah!’ said she, ‘ how my sick mother will like a bit of this cake!’ so having made a hearty meal herself of it, she carried away the rest for her mother, not thinking she had done any harm.”

“ Ah, mamma,” cried Alfred with tears in his eyes, “ how I wish I had not set the trap to catch that good

Velvet; she might have had my cake, and welcome, if I had but known what she took it for; how sorry I am! I wish Velvet was alive again, with all my heart."

" Did I not tell you, Alfred, you would be sorry for killing the *nasty brown mouse*, before the day was over?"

" Oh! yes! dear mamma, and so I am indeed; I wish you had told me the story before, and then I should not have set the trap.—And so I suppose poor Downy will die, because she has no one to feed her."

" Well, Alfred, shall I finish my story?"

" Yes, if you please, mamma; but you don't know any more of it, do you?"

“ Only this, when Downy found Velvet did not return, she died of grief.”

“ Ah, mamma!” cried Alfred, bursting into tears, “ what a cruel boy I have been! I have killed both Downy and Velvet—I will never be so cruel again.”

Mrs. Clifford charmed with the sensibility of her little boy, kissed him most tenderly, saying, “ Dry your tears, my sweet Alfred, and resolve not to be so desirous of the death of a little animal again.

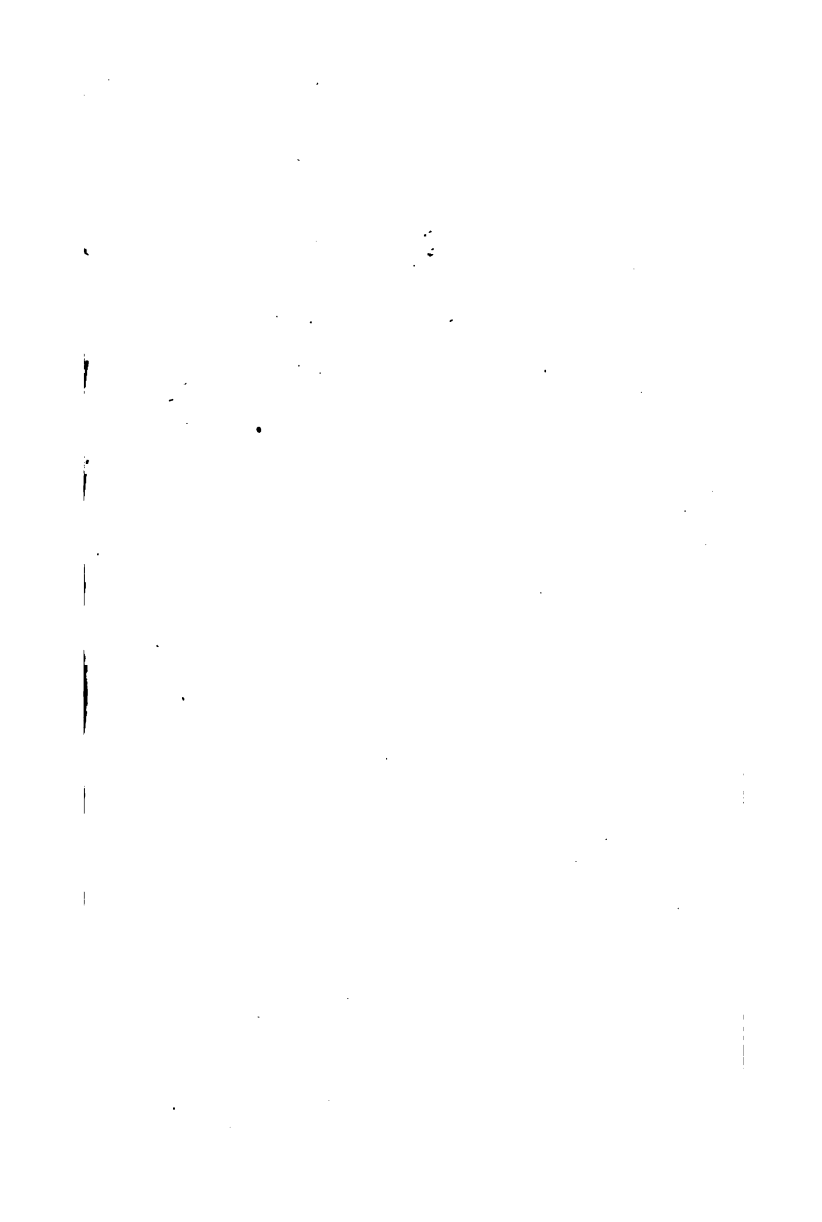
“ Though it is very necessary to kill them sometimes, or they would soon destroy all our food and clothes; still when we are forced from necessity to kill any thing, we should do it with as much

humanity as we can, and never inflict unnecessary pain.

“ I should myself have been forced to set the trap for Velvet, only I did not like to see my Alfred, merely from revenge; wishing so eagerly for the death of a poor mouse, who did not know it was doing any harm in eating the cake.”

Alfred kissed his mother, and thanked her for her kindness in telling him the story; and wiping his tears away, went into the garden to play till tea was ready.

FINIS.





Drawn by Brook.

Engraved by PASOZZO

"THE BLOW STUNNED HIM AND HE FELL TO THE GROUND.

Vide The Little Prisoner Pa.66

London Published by Dean & Munday Threadneedle Street Jan<sup>y</sup> 1828.

THE  
LITTLE PRISONER.

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"HARK! what a noise there is below stairs!" said Mrs. Charlton, laying down her work, and addressing her husband, who was writing at a table near her; "the servants are certainly quarrelling."

"I am afraid, Charlotte, it is Ferdinand committing some outrage," replied Captain Charlton; "that boy is so violent, that if I do not find some means to soften his heart, and tame his furious temper,



he will grow up a pest to society, and prove the sorrow of our future years."

"The tumult increases," said Mrs. Charlton; "do step down, and hear what is the matter."

Before Captain Charlton could comply with his lady's request, the door suddenly opened, and a pretty, fair boy, of ten years of age, just put his curly head into the room, and said, in a voice of alarm, "Dear mamma, do come and speak to Ferdinand; he is beating the cook with Philip's coach-whip."

"Let me go to him," said Mr. Charlton, gently putting his wife from the door; "I think I will cure him of such tricks for the future."

"Pray, Henry, do not be too

severe," cried the fond mother, seeing the colour heighten in her husband's face.

"I trust I can find a method of punishing him without blows," said Mr. Charlton, hastily descending the staircase, followed by his eldest son.

On entering the kitchen, the first object that met his eyes was Ferdinand held by the coachman, while the footman was forcibly wrenching a whip from his grasp. Although his hands were restrained, the young gentleman was kicking and biting with all his strength; using, at the same time, the most violent language that uncontrolled passion could suggest; while his inflamed and distorted visage gave him the ap-

pearance of some animal, combatting with his keepers.

“What is the meaning of this disgraceful scene?” said Mr. Charlton, sternly surveying the hostile group; “Ferdinand, is it *you* whom I see under such degrading circumstances?”

Ferdinand only answered, by redoubling his frantic efforts to release himself from the grasp of Philip.

“Let him go, Philip,” said Captain Charlton; “he is an unworthy boy, and has already bitten you severely.”

“Aye, your honour, I think a muzzle would not be amiss for master Ferdinand,” replied the coachman, relinquishing his hold.

Ferdinand no sooner found his hands at liberty, than, unmindful of the presence of his father, he darted on Philip, and struck him with all the strength he could muster.

“Robert,” said Captain Charlton, calmly, turning to the footman; “step to Jones, the constable, and fetch a pair of handcuffs. When my son behaves like a madman, he must be treated as one.”

These words were scarcely pronounced, when Ferdinand turned his eyes, with some alarm, on his father; the colour receded from his before-flushed cheek, and he stood, in the presence of his justly-offended parent; his breast still heaving with the violent passion by which he had been excited.

Captain Charlton addressed him in a mild and impressive manner: "Ferdinand, are you convinced of your folly? and are you sorry for your past conduct?"

Ferdinand remained silent.

Mr. Charlton again put the question.

Ferdinand answered, by sneering at Philip.

"Dear Ferdinand," said Felix, affectionately taking his brother's hand, "do speak to papa; tell him you are sorry for your past conduct, and will never act so unworthily again; consider, how dreadful it would be, for a gentleman's son to be put in irons, like a common felon."

"I do not care," returned Ferdi-

nand, gloomily surveying Robert, as he entered the kitchen with the hand-cuffs.

“I am not sorry, and I will not say so!”

“Unhappy boy,” said Captain Charlton, regarding his son with an air of painful commiseration; which was more irksome to the irritable Ferdinand than the utmost severity, “you know not the extent of your crime: you do not care; you feel no shame, no remorse for your uncharitable conduct: you do not consider that the same spirit which leads you to behave thus, will one day hurry you on to commit murder; my servants gaze on you with pity and contempt.”

“Dear papa, he is sorry; indeed he is!” cried Felix, clinging beseechingly to his father’s arm; “his heart is too full to say so; but I know he is repentant.”

“Do not weep, my kind-hearted boy,” said Mr. Charlton, patting the curly head of the afflicted child, “your brother shall have a fair trial:” then turning to Ferdinand, he told him to follow him into the study.

Slowly and sullenly Ferdinand obeyed his father’s mandate; when Mr. Charlton, taking a seat by a large table, placed the culprit on the other side, directly opposite: “Ferdinand Charlton, I have not yet heard the cause which gave rise to the criminal violence I have just

witnessed; and, as I never punish you unheard, listen attentively to what these people have to say against you. Philip, how did this affair commence?"

"Please your honour," said the cook, who had followed the other servants into the study; "the quarrel began with master Ferdinand and me."

"Come forward, Mary, and give your evidence."

Ferdinand regarded her with a look of scornful defiance as she approached the table. "Nay, master Ferdinand, do not sneer at me; I am sorry to occasion you any trouble; but your papa wishes me to speak on this matter, I shall only tell the plain truth."



“Do not mind that perverse boy, Mary; but answer me: How did this brawl commence?”

“Why, sir, I had just washed my kitchen, and master Ferdinand would run, to and fro, with his dirty feet, and trundle his hoop over the clean bricks; and when I asked him civilly to desist, he struck me over the head with the hoop, and threw down the pail of water all over the kitchen and my clothes. I told Robert to call his mamma, as I found my remonstrances of no use; and this put my young gentleman’s spirit up, and he ran to Philip, who was passing through the court-yard with his horses, and snatching his whip out of his hand, began dealing his blows in all di-

rections, till the coachman succeeded in securing him from committing further violence."

Robert, and Philip, and lastly, Felix, though most unwillingly, bore witness to the same."

"Now, sir," said his father, turning to Ferdinand; "what have you to say in your defence."

"I have done nothing to deserve all this," returned Ferdinand, bursting into a passion of tears: "I had a right to go through the kitchen, if I pleased, without Mary daring to interfere with me, or my hoop."

"Who gave you that right, Ferdinand? how often have I forbidden you to go into the kitchen, or to interfere with the servants. You have a large room, and a play-

ground, entirely for your use and amusement: You cannot find any pleasure in their company, and yours is irksome to them. Your conduct admits of no excuse. I find you guilty of assault on the person of my servant Mary; and, without your humble submission, and repentance for the same, I shall commit you, like every other riotous and disorderly person, to hard labour and solitary confinement."

Ferdinand was too proud to make the least profession of sorrow, and considered his father's sentence of little importance, as he knew, of old, that his brother's entreaties and his mamma's tears, generally succeeded in obtaining for him a pardon; and he supposed the con-

finement of a day, and an additional lesson, would be the extent of his punishment. In vain the gentle Felix entreated his passionate brother to humble his spirit, and to solicit his father's forgiveness: Ferdinand, who, at another time, would have returned his caresses with interest, now pushed him rudely from him, calling him a base tell-tale and hypocrite.

Felix Charlton could hardly be considered his brother's senior, as they were twins; and though they had not both been nursed by their mother, or rocked in the same cradle, they were tenderly attached to each other. Ferdinand was a weak, sickly baby, subject to fits from his birth, and Mrs. Charlton was constantly

under the painful apprehension of losing him; her medical attendant advised her to seek a strong, healthy young woman for a wet nurse, and to send the baby into the country for better air, as the thick smoky atmosphere of the metropolis was very injurious to the lungs of his infant patient.

Mrs. Charlton was unwilling to separate the boys, whom nature had so closely united; but finding herself unequal to the task of nursing both, she reluctantly committed Ferdinand to the care of a female servant, who had for years formed a part of her household; and, at last, married from the family. Felix, a fine sprightly infant, was kept under her own superintendence.

Ferdinand remained in the country with his foster-mother, Rachel Gardener, till he was eight years old; his delicate and precarious state of health not permitting him to accompany his mamma and brother to the East Indies, whither they followed his papa's regiment. In the meantime, Ferdinand was completely spoiled by his nurse; who imagined, that indulging him in every whim and caprice, was the strongest proof she could give, of the attachment she really felt for the weakly babe entrusted to her care. Her ruinous partiality, directed by these erroneous sentiments, laid the foundation of these sudden and violent gusts of passion, which formed the misery of

his future years, and became the constant source of disquiet and alarm to his fond and anxious parents.

When Captain Charlton and his lady returned to England, their first thoughts were directed towards their dear, but long absent child : and they lost no time in going themselves to fetch him from his quiet retreat in the country. He was greatly improved in his personal appearance, and looked so healthy and lively, that the fond mother, as she folded him in her arms, could hardly credit that the fine, rosy, laughing boy, who clung to her neck, was the tiny wailing infant, whose illness had given rise to so many anxious

thoughts; and had caused her to shed so many bitter tears.

It was not without some feelings of regret that Ferdinand bade adieu to his foster-mother, and the home of his childhood; but his sorrow was soon dispelled by the society of his amiable and sweet-tempered brother. The twins were as dissimilar in person, as they were in disposition and manners; Felix was fair, with large soft blue eyes, and flaxen hair; and possessed a most pleasing and benevolent aspect, which won the esteem of all who knew him: and these advantages were accompanied by such ingenuous, affectionate, and confiding manners, that he amply repaid his parents, by his grateful



and kindly disposition, for their utmost care. The cheerful tone of his voice gave pleasure to those with whom he conversed; and among his young comrades he was the universal friend and peace-maker, and the active protector of the helpless and oppressed; he gained, as if by general consent, the appellation of happy Felix.

Though Ferdinand was slightly formed and delicate, and often suffered from sudden and violent fits of illness, which rendered him an object of constant solicitude to his parents, he had bright black eyes, chestnut curls, and laughing dimples; and, when not disfigured by passion, would generally be reckoned a pretty, spirited, brown boy:

at times he was joyous and animated; but in the height of his glee, if any one dared to cross his will, or interfere in his sports, he gave way to the most unreasonable bursts of anger, which were generally succeeded by a fit of sullen and perverse obstinacy; and if he could not wreak his indignation on the offending parties, he would even disfigure his own person with the same marks of violence he often bestowed on others.

Dreading a fresh attack of his old complaint, his mamma, on his first return to his paternal roof, had suffered these hasty ebullitions of temper to remain unchecked; till they gained such an ascendancy over his youthful mind, that neither

the gentle remonstrances of his father, nor the amiable example of his brother, could subdue his fiery and impetuous disposition, or convince him of the wickedness of yielding, on all occasions, to the influence of passion.

During the holidays, there was a constant scene of warfare carried on between Master Ferdinand and his father's servants; and, though only ten years of age, he contrived, by his unhappy temper, to disarrange the whole domestic economy of the house; setting servants and parents alike at defiance; and even the present offence was trifling when compared with the usual pranks he was constantly playing.

Mr. Charlton was a great enemy

to personal chastisement; which, when applied to Ferdinand, only seemed to render the offender desperate; and augmented the natural defect of his character. It is true, he never failed to repent of his faults when he felt the evil effects they produced visited on himself, or on his dearer part, his beloved Felix; but, on the first provocation he received, all his good resolutions vanished. Felix was the only person who possessed the least influence over him; but, on this occasion, it was rendered of no avail; as he considered Felix had deeply injured him, by calling his papa to quell the riot, to which his imprudent passion had given rise. He now held his ears, and turned from his

judicious advice with hasty and indignant gestures.

He was rather surprised at remaining unpunished in the study, while his father gave orders to Philip to put the horses to the carriage; and still more puzzled, when Captain Charlton told him to bid Felix good bye, as he must go with him.

“And where do you mean to take me, papa?” he said, in a tone of considerable alarm.

“To prison, Ferdinand.”

“Dear papa, you are not in earnest?” cried Felix, bursting into tears. “Oh! pray do not put your threat into execution. He will be good! indeed, he will!”

“Hear me, Ferdinand, for the

last time, and weigh well my words. If you will candidly confess your past error, and ask Mary's pardon, promising faithfully to amend for the future, I will forgive you, and think no more of your bad conduct. I give you five minutes to determine on which path you mean to pursue; and if, at the expiration of that time, you remain obstinate, no entreaty shall mitigate your just punishment."

As Mr. Charlton ceased speaking, he put his watch down on the table, saying, "It wants five minutes to five o'clock."

- "To ask Mary's pardon!—that I never will," thought Ferdinand. He saw the minute-hand rapidly moving round the face of the watch,

he met the imploring, tearful glance of his brother's soft blue eyes, and he felt that his father was steadily surveying his varying countenance; but false pride tied his tongue; the words rose to his lips, but the good resolutions died in his heart before he gave them utterance; and he started with a cry of painful emotion, as the great dial in the hall struck the hour; he trembled and turned pale, but his emotion elicited no word of repentance from his lips.

"Ferdinand," said his father, sternly, "the hour for conciliation is past—follow me."

"Let me kiss dear mamma, first."

"Do you deserve the caresses of a kind parent, Ferdinand? The sight of you would make her regret

having given birth to so unworthy a son."

Ferdinand cast one last look on Felix, as he left the room. The kind-hearted boy was leaning his head on the table, weeping bitterly. Ferdinand felt he was the cause of those tears, and his heart smote him; but pride came again to his assistance. "Papa only means to frighten me," he said to himself. "Yes, yes! I see it all now; he means to terrify me into asking Mary's pardon; but I never will."

With this resolution he shrunk into a corner of the carriage, and, covering his face with his hands, remained sad and silent, while they proceeded through the streets of N—.

Mr. Charlton ordered Philip to



stop the carriage at the foot of the hill, leading to the castle, as he wished to speak to Mr. Smeaton, the Governor. Ferdinand was rather startled at this order, but he still imagined his father only meant to frighten him.

They alighted from the carriage, and ascended the hill leading to this ancient and noble edifice, in perfect silence; and Captain Charlton left his son in the court-yard, within the iron gates; while he went into the castle, to speak to Mr. Smeaton.

Besides being very passionate, Ferdinand was very impatient; and he was soon tired of walking round the fine quadrangle and observing the gothic structure of the august building; and he began, in his own

heart, to revile his papa for leaving him so long alone in a strange place. "He has certainly gone home, and means to leave me here all night," said Ferdinand; "but I will not stay, I am determined." Then approaching the old porter, who sat by the gate, he asked him, in no very courteous tone, to let him through.

"I am sorry, young gentleman, I cannot comply with your request," returned old Grenard Pike; "but I have received orders to the contrary."

"And who dared to give you such orders?" said Ferdinand, reddening with passion.

"Those whose authority can neither be disputed by you nor me, Master," returned the porter, drily.

"So you had better leave off kicking the gate, which only hurts your own heels, and cannot conjure the key out of my pocket."

"You ugly, disagreeable old creature!" said Ferdinand, almost screaming with passion; "I will inform the governor of your insolent conduct."

"You will never have a better opportunity than the present," returned the provoking Grenard; "for here comes Mr. Smeaton."

Hearing some one approaching, Ferdinand left off kicking the gate, and abusing the porter, as he expected his papa was with Mr. Smeaton, and was very angry at being disappointed.

"I would thank you, sir," he

said, addressing the Governor, "to order your man to let me through the gate, as I do not choose to stay here any longer."

"You can give no orders here, young man," returned Mr. Smeaton. "Perhaps you are not aware that you are my prisoner?"

"Your prisoner, indeed!" exclaimed Ferdinand, relapsing into his former passion. "Pray, where is papa?"

"At home, by this time," said Mr. Smeaton.

"Then I will go home too," returned Ferdinand; renewing his fruitless assault on the gate. "I hate you! I will not stay here another minute."

"You had better quietly submit

to your punishment," said the Governor: "this violence will render your condition worse instead of bettering it. Those who commit evil deeds, ought always to meet the chastisement they deserve."

"You are a cruel, hard-hearted man!" sobbed Ferdinand. "I have heard our boys, at school, call our master a tyrant, and I dare say you are one too!"

The Governor only smiled at this sally, which appeared greatly to divert old Grenard Pike.

"Well, Master Charlton, if you prefer staying here all night, in the rain, (which now began to fall very fast), without your supper, I will wish you a very good bye."

When Ferdinand found all hope

of inducing the porter to open the gate was at an end, he began seriously to consider, that it would be his best plan to follow Mr. Smeaton quietly into the Castle; as he did not much relish the idea of passing the night in the open air, with no other companion than Grenard Pike, the surly porter, with whom he had already commenced hostilities; and even he had retreated into the little lodge by the side of the gate.

With a very ill grace, he followed Mr. Smeaton into the Castle; when that gentleman conducted him to a small, neat apartment of modern structure, which belonged to the suite of rooms allotted for the use of the Governor and his family.

Ferdinand cast a hasty glance

round the apartment; every thing was very plain; the furniture was of polished oak, and oil-cloth covered the floor, and a small bureau bedstead occupied a corner of the room; the heavy iron bars that secured the high narrow casement, was the only circumstance which conveyed to his mind the idea of a prison, which he had been used to picture to himself as a horrible, dark place, full of toads and snakes, and the like nuisances.

“I hope,” said Ferdinand, in a discontented voice, “you will send me something to eat, for I am very hungry.”

“You will have the usual allowance at the proper time,” returned Mr. Smeaton. “Master Charlton,

I shall not see you again before to-morrow; I therefore wish you a very good night; recommending you to better thoughts, and hoping you will not forget to say your prayers, and ask forgiveness of your heavenly Father, for your late conduct."

So saying he left the room, and Ferdinand, with no very enviable feelings, heard him lock the door after him.

"I have read in history of people making their escape from prison," said Ferdinand to himself; "perhaps I may contrive some plan to get out of this hateful place, and outwit this spiteful old Governor, and his ill-natured porter."

Indulging this idea, he carefully examined every corner of the room,



but his search ended in disappointing every hope of escape. The windows were placed at a great height from the ground, so that he was forced to climb on a chair to reach them; and though, at length, he succeeded in opening the casement, the iron bars that secured it were so close together, that they would only admit his hand between them.

Tired with his fruitless scrutiny, vexed and disappointed with himself, and mortified with his present degrading situation, he sat down on the ground, and cried aloud. While indulging in tears, which flowed more from pride than remorse, the door opened, and a stern-looking old man entered the room, and, without saying a single

word, placed before the young prisoner a white roll and a pitcher of water.

Ferdinand viewed his unsociable visitor, for some minutes, with infinite disdain; the anger he had been obliged to bridle in solitude now broke out afresh. "Do you imagine, old man, that I will live upon bread and water? No: I will starve first!"

"Many a proud word comes off an empty stomach," was the provoking reply. "But please yourself, young gentleman; no other food is allowed here by the Governor, unless the prisoners purchase it themselves."

Ferdinand put his hand, with an air of great ostentation, in his

pocket, but he looked very foolish when he discovered he was pennyless; and he remembered he had been obliged to lay out all the ready money he possessed in repairing the damage he had done to the windows of old Betty Lund, the cake-woman; for she, in a fit of passion almost equal to his own, had dragged the offending culprit before his father, who obliged him to make good the mischief he had done.

The conviction of his poverty only served to heighten Ferdinand's displeasure, and flinging the bread disdainfully on the ground, he told the old man, he did not care for him or the Governor either; that he might eat the bread himself; for he was a gentleman, and had never been used to such hard fare."

“Very likely not,” returned the man, coolly turning on his heel; “you then knèw how to behave yourself like one.” Then seeing Ferdinand dash down the pitcher of water, he added, with a sarcastic smile, “it is a pity to quarrel with your food; you will have no more provided for you before this time to-morrow morning.” He then unfolded the bureau bed, and placed a small bundle, containing Ferdinand’s night-clothes, on a chair near it; picked up the fragments of the broken pitcher, wished the refractory prisoner good night, and then left the room.

Ferdinand with some alarm saw the daylight diminish through the high narrow windows; and being

naturally fearful in the dark, his pride began to abate, and he recalled, with no small degree of terror, the strange stories of ghosts, and the marvellous adventures of fairies and hobgoblins, with which Rachael Gardener had imprudently soothed his wayward infancy; implanting in his young mind a firm belief in these fictitious and imaginary beings, and he scarcely dare glance round the room, or raise his head, for fear of encountering some such frightful appearance.

Turning from these gloomy thoughts, he pictured to himself his own comfortable home, and contemplated, in idea, his dear Mamma and Felix seated round the tea-table, while his Papa read aloud to

them some amusing and instructive tale; and he now bitterly repented of his folly, as he contrasted his situation with theirs. "I wonder what makes Felix so happy?" he said; "he is always cheerful and good-tempered, and never gets into any scrapes, like me; but then he is never treated harshly, as I am; he is loved by every body who knows him, while the servants call me an ill-tempered, disagreeable, rude boy."

Had Ferdinand possessed the least knowledge of himself, he would have found that the universal dislike expressed by strangers towards him, originated in his own bosom, and sprung from that restless disposition he had never attempted to control.

After indulging, for some time, in these gloomy reflections, he thought he should be much safer in bed, and hastily undressing, he retired to rest, and soon lost, in the forgetfulness of sleep, the cares and sorrows which had marked the day.

The next morning, he awoke with the sun, and, for a few minutes, gazed round the apartment like one in a dream, who entertains a strange doubt of the reality of the scenes in which he often finds himself an unwilling actor. At length recollection returned, and he sprung from his bed with renewed sorrow, and increasing appetite. He began to wish for even a small piece of that bread he had in his passion so wantonly cast away, when he contem-

plated the hours that must elapse before the old man would renew his visit. Looking carefully round the room, he discovered, to his infinite satisfaction, the remains of the crushed roll, lying at some distance from him on the floor; and a beautiful robin, who had entered at the casement, (which he had left unclosed the preceding evening,) making a hearty meal of the same.

“ Pretty robin,” he exclaimed, regarding with tenderness the red-breasted stranger, “ you are a silly bird, to venture into a prison to share my sorry meal.” As he approached to take up the broken roll, the robin hopped to a little distance, regarding him attentively with his



bright black eye, as if willing, yet fearful, of commencing a further acquaintance. Ferdinand scattered some crumbs on the sill of the window to induce him to stay, but had the mortification of seeing him fly from the casement, and perch on a large mulberry-tree in the castle garden, whence he repaid the young prisoner for his breakfast with a cheerful song.

“Oh, what a lovely morning!” sighed Ferdinand, climbing up to the window, and looking wistfully on the garden beneath; “how I wish I could get out into the open air. Happy robin! you are at liberty to hop from bough to bough, and divert yourself among the fruit

and flowers; while I am shut up in a dismal room, to weep and pine over my hard fate."

Ferdinand determined to confess his repentance for his past folly to the Governor, and to beg that gentleman to intercede with his father, to soften the rigour of his sentence, and release him from prison; but in the opportunity to do this he was disappointed, as two days passed away, and he only saw the cross old man, for whom he felt the greatest antipathy, and who informed him that Mr. Smeaton was absent on business, and would not return till the next day.

Ferdinand rose on the morrow with a heavy heart, but hope lurked beneath the vexation he felt in being

kept thus long in solitary confinement. He should, most likely, see Mr. Smeaton; or his papa might think he had sufficiently expiated his fault, and would come and take him home; or, at least, send his dear Felix to console and comfort him in his misfortune. Possessing a very active mind, Ferdinand was completely weary of having nothing to do, or to divert his attention from his own melancholy thoughts. Gladly, during his confinement in that solitary chamber, would he have written the hardest Latin exercise, or studied the longest sum, with more pleasure than ever he flew a kite, or played a game of marbles.

The robin came every morning for his daily donation of crumbs,

and the greatest intimacy was soon established between Ferdinand and his winged visitor; but robin could not stay all day to amuse him, neither was Ferdinand so cruel as to detain him; but he always hailed the appearance of the bird with unspeakable delight. The whole week passed without his seeing Mr. Smeaton, and he began to despair of ever being released from confinement; and though he hated the sight of the old man, and was always very rude to him, he now determined to treat him with more civility for the future; as he apprehended that Mark reported his insolent behaviour to the Governor, which was the reason that gentleman never visited his apartment.

One morning, he felt unusually dull, for robin had not come to visit him; he therefore hailed the approach of old Mark French with some pleasure, and left off tracing with his finger the clumsy pattern on the oil-cloth, and addressed him in a lively and conciliatory manner.

Instead of bread and water, Mark brought him a bason of nice new milk and a buttered roll for his breakfast, and remarking the alteration in Ferdinand's voice and manner, he said, "So, Master Charlton, I suppose you are willing, at last, to listen to reason: I find close confinement and hard fare can quell even *your* spirit. I thought it would be strange if the same method which tames the wild beasts of

the forest should fail in producing the desired effect on you. However I am glad to see this change in you; and hope you are well this fine morning?"

"Not a bit the better for seeing you, with your sour face and your ugly wig," said Ferdinand, relapsing into passion; "or for being called a wild beast."

"I did not call you one," returned Mark drily; "but if I had, I find I should not have made a great mistake, while you continue to behave like one."

"I meant to be a good boy," said Ferdinand, bursting into tears; "but the sight of you, and your provoking speeches, drove all my better thoughts out of my head."

"I am sorry for it," returned Mark, "for I still see great room for amendment. Had you conducted yourself with any temper, I would have allowed you to walk in the castle garden this fine spring morning."

"What is the use of telling me of sunshine, which I cannot enjoy?" returned Ferdinand, sobbing between every word; "I wish it rained, with all my heart."

"Indeed!" said Mark, "do you quarrel with this beautiful day? that, surely, cannot have offended you."

"Yes, but it has, though! If it rained, I should not regret so much being denied taking my pleasure abroad. I wish I had never quarrelled with any one, for I am tired

of being confined in this horrid place.”

“Your late intemperance is no proof of it,” returned the provoking old man. “For my part, I think you must be very much attached to prison, or you would take more pains to regulate your conduct, and to keep a civil tongue in your head; for I assure you, Master Charlton, while you continue to behave in this saucy manner to those that have authority over you, you will never be set at liberty.”

Ferdinand was so terrified by this assurance, that, forgetting his former pride, he clung beseechingly to old Mark’s arm, and said, in an humble voice, “I am sorry for what



I have said; forgive me this once, and I will try and behave better for the future."

"I take you at your word, Master Charlton, and, for once, will try how long you will be able to keep your good resolution."

"I promise you I will never act so unworthily again," said Ferdinand, in a confiding and affectionate tone.

"Never is a long word," returned Mark. You have not yet been tempted; and those who rely upon their own strength, are very often betrayed into error."

"On whom then should I rely?" said Ferdinand, fixing his fine dark eyes, with a look of anxious inquiry,

on the old man, who, taking his hand, shook it affectionately, and replied,

“Man, left to himself, my dear child, “can do nothing but commit evil; he remains in a savage, unenlightened state of existence, yielding, on all occasions, to the same bad passions which deform your character, and render you an object of fear and aversion to your young friends. To remedy all this, you must, first, carefully examine your own heart, and try to discover in what particular you most offend. If you take a candid view of yourself, you will find the cause of your displeasure originates wholly in the wrong estimate you form of the words and actions of others. If

friends point out to you the error of your conduct, it gives rise to the most violent resentment. Instead of listening patiently to what they have they have to say, you construe their very looks into insults levelled at you; and, rejecting their whole-some advice, you debase your mind, by yielding to the most unreasonable gusts of passion. You call them names; and they, in return, view you with contempt, and laugh at your impotent resentment."

"Alas!" said Ferdinand, in a subdued voice, "how can I remedy this evil?"

"You must pray to God, my child, to soften your heart, and to assist you in conquering these evil passions. Confess your faults to

him, and he will not fail to aid you in the arduous task of self-improvement. At present, your mind, like your person, is in prison, and your good qualities are completely obscured by these bad propensities. If you resolutely persevere in subduing your violent temper, and regulate your words and actions by the precepts laid down for us in God's blessed book, he will bestow on you that liberty, of which no earthly power can deprive you."

He here ceased speaking, to see what effect his words produced on his young auditor. Ferdinand had hid his face, and was weeping silently to himself. "You appear sorry for the past, Master Charlton, and I will not deny you the walk I

just now promised you; and, if you can so far govern your temper, as to commit no act of violence during the day, you shall return home to your kind parents in the evening."

Ferdinand was now ready to jump for joy; he fetched his hat, wiped away his tears, and was soon all life and animation. After his long confinement, Ferdinand enjoyed the open air exceedingly. The castle garden was a beautiful spot, full of fine old trees, and elegant shrubs. The birds were singing in the boughs; and the bees were busily engaged in collecting their honied store, and humming among the flowers. Ferdinand felt so happy in once more tasting the sweets of liberty, that he fully determined

never to give way to passion or ill-humour again. He sauntered round the green terrace, delighted and amused by every fresh object that met his view.

He had not been long in the garden, before he saw, to his infinite satisfaction, a little boy, about his own age and size, advancing from an arbour, at the end of the walk, with a book in his hand. Ferdinand, who anticipated a friend and playmate in the young gentleman, ran up to him, and accosted him in a friendly and polite manner, enquired his name, and asked him to come and play with him.

“My name is Lewis Smeaton: I am the Governor’s eldest son, and

cannot comply with your request, as I am now going off to school."

"School does not commence till nine o'clock," said Ferdinand; "I think you might spare half an hour from study."

"No," returned Lewis; "I will never lose the head place in my class, which I have long maintained with credit to myself, to idle away the time allotted to study. I have not finished learning my lessons; and, if I had, I dare not play with you."

"Why not, Master Smeaton? Has your papa forbidden you?"

"No," returned Lewis, "that is not my reason for declining your offer; but I have been told that you

are so passionate and ill-tempered, that you quarrel with every body; that you not only make use of your hands, in your fits of anger, but even bite those who are so unlucky as to offend you."

Ferdinand coloured like scarlet, bit his lips, twirled his hat between his hands, cast his eyes on the ground, and then remained silent.

"I was sorry to hear such an unfavourable account of you," continued Lewis, "and I think your looks do not correspond with your character; and, did I judge by your appearance, I should never take you for the passionate boy, who is under confinement in the castle for his bad conduct."

Ferdinand's anger began to rise;



but he remembered the promise he had given to old Mark, and with great difficulty bridled his tongue. "Though I have quarrelled with other people," he said, "that is no reason why I should fall out with you."

"Very likely not," returned Lewis; "you may be sincere, but I dare not trust to your promises. I am not so patient and amiable as your brother Felix, and yet you sometimes beat him."

"And if I do," said Ferdinand, losing all self-control, "that is no concern of your's. Pray what do you know of my brother Felix?"

"He is my friend."

"Your friend!" said Ferdinand, repeating his words. "Your ac-

quaintance must be very short, for I never saw you in my life before."

"Felix and I were children together in India, where my father first became acquainted with your's," returned Lewis; "and had we returned to England at the same time, you would not have been a stranger to the name of Smeaton. I have been staying with dear Felix since your confinement; and we have spent many happy hours together."

"Happy hours! Could Felix be happy, and I away from him?" said Ferdinand, his eyes swimming in tears.

"You were certainly missed at home, Ferdinand; but we were all so quiet and comfortable, that Captain Charlton said, it was only your vio-

lent temper that disturbed his domestic peace; and that you never should return home, till you could conduct yourself like your brother."

"Then I must remain in prison all my life," said Ferdinand, dashing away his tears, and hastily walking away, "for I shall never be such a good boy as Felix."

This adventure put him into a sad ill-humour, and he no longer enjoyed the pleasant garden, the pretty flowers, and the nice ripe strawberries, which old Mark had given him permission to eat. He saw Lewis leave the garden without regret, and he felt disposed, in his heart, to dislike him, though he had only told him the plain truth. He now sat down on a bench, and

amused himself with watching the gardener's boy, who was weeding a flower-bed near him.

He had not remained long here, before a pretty robin perched on the top of the sun-dial, which stood in the middle of the walk. Ferdinand took it into his head that this red-breast was his own favourite robin; and he was greatly exasperated, when the boy, picking up a pebble from among the gravel, turned to him, and said, "Do not you think, master, it would be a good throw, if I could hit that bird with this stone?"

"It is my robin!" said Ferdinand, in a sharp and angry tone; "and if you dare to throw a stone at him, I will throw one at you!"

The youth laughed, and threw the pebble at random towards the sun-dial. Without waiting to see whether his favourite had received any injury or not, Ferdinand caught up a sharp flint, and threw it at the boy's head.

The blow stunned him, and he fell to the ground, almost at the feet of the terrified Ferdinand; whose passion subsided the moment he saw the boy fall, and his blood flow. Supposing he had killed him, he wrung his hands and screamed in a piteous manner. His outcries brought Mr. Smeaton and his servants to the spot; who, raising the youth from the ground, soon brought him to his senses; but the stone had wounded his head,

and his face was pale, and covered with blood.

Mr. Smeaton ordered him to be conveyed to the house, and dispatched one of the men for a surgeon; then, turning to the weeping and terrified Ferdinand, he took him by the hand, and led him back to the apartment he had so long occupied; and, closing the door, thus addressed him:—

“ See, Ferdinand! the dreadful effects of passion; see, to what frightful lengths your ungovernable temper has hurried you. This morning you have been guilty of a great crime; should this lad die from the blow you have given him, as perhaps he may, should you ever be happy again?”

“Oh no; indeed I should not,” said Ferdinand. “I never felt so miserable before. I would give all my playthings, every thing I had in the world, to save his life.”

“You must do more than all this, Ferdinand; you must for ever renounce the evil habits which have led you into the commission of such a heavy crime. Remember, that it was in a fit of anger Cain slew his brother; and that action was so highly displeasing to God, that he set a mark upon his brow, that he might be shunned by all men. And do not you think, God will set a mark upon you?”

“I hope not,” replied Ferdinand, greatly troubled; “for I never saw any one so disfigured.”

“Then, Ferdinand, you have never seen yourself. The bad passions you constantly indulge in, have stamped their character so strongly on your countenance, that no one can look at you without discerning your disposition; and, knowing your unhappy failing, they avoid you as a quarrelsome and dangerous person.”

“I heard papa say, that the felon who was executed on the hill, last month for murder, was a very ill-looking man: surely, dear sir, I do not appear like him?”

“You are very young, Ferdinand, at present,” returned Mr. Smeaton, “and the muscles of your face are soft and flexible, and take readily every impression of the mind. Alth



evil passions are affections of the mind; and the furious gusts of anger, under whose influence you often act, when frequently repeated, swell and distort those muscles, till they draw your face into ugly crooked lines and channels, which will so disfigure the natural cast of your countenance, that, [in time, it will produce a complete change in your features, and give them a bad and sinister expression; so that everybody, at the first glance, will say, "That is a fine boy, but he has a very wicked look; I am sure he will never come to any good."

"And shall I always look like a bad boy?" said Ferdinand.

"Doubtless, while you continue to act like one," returned Mr.

Smeaton; "but directly you remove the cause, this unfavourable impression will gradually subside; and your face become as faithful a mirror of your virtues, as it is, at present, of your faults. Become amiable and good, and you will look so; the inward satisfaction you will feel in the performance of your duty, will be expressed by your countenance; and your company will be as much sought and enjoyed, as it is, at present, detested and avoided."

"Oh! dear sir," said Ferdinand, "I begin to feel how weak and sinful it is to give way to bad passions."

"I am glad to find you are, at last, convinced of your folly," replied Mr. Smeaton; "and now you can talk calmly, and seem sensible

of your faults, tell me which of the commandments you have broken this morning?"

Ferdinand remained silent, and seemed to consider a long time within himself. At last he said, "Indeed, sir, I cannot tell."

"What is the sixth?"

"Thou shalt not kill," returned Ferdinand, trembling from head to foot. "Surely, dear sir, you do not think me guilty of murder?"

"If you have not committed actual murder, Ferdinand, you have shed blood; and if the lad lives, it is more through the mercy of God, than any forbearance on your part. When you threw that stone, what was uppermost in your thoughts?"

"I do not know, sir. I was in

such a passion, that I could not think; but I am sure I never meant to kill him."

"Very likely not," returned Mr. Smeaton; "but is it any consolation to the poor lad, and his parents, that you were in a state of madness when you wounded him?"

"Oh! no, sir; I am sure it would not ameliorate his condition; and would prove but a sorry excuse for my rashness."

"You have reason, indeed, Ferdinand, to thank God that the injury he has received is but trifling; but never banish from your mind the conviction, that it might have been otherwise."

Mr. Smeaton's words sunk deeply into the heart of his young auditor;

he reviewed the actions of the past day, and trembled at his own folly. In a humble and subdued voice, he confessed to the worthy Governor the remorse he had felt in the morning, and the resolution he had then formed of never yielding to passion again; faithfully relating his conversation with Lewis in the garden, and the angry feelings it had produced in his breast.

Mr. Smeaton listened to his candid relation with great interest; and, when he had concluded, said, "Ferdinand, though you were offended with my son for speaking the truth, how came you to vent your passion on the unoffending gardener's boy?"

"Indeed, sir, if you think I threw

the stone at him out of pure malice, you are greatly mistaken. I did not attempt to speak to him, till he provoked my displeasure by his cruelty." . Ferdinand then related the boy's conduct with regard to the robin, and his persevering in throwing the stone after he had told him to desist.

" He was very wrong, Ferdinand, in wishing to hurt an innocent, harmless little bird; and your indignation at his conduct would have done you great credit, had it been guided by moderation. But in what manner did you speak to him? Did you calmly point out to him the cruelty of the action he meditated? or did you in a fierce and passionate tone, command him to desist?"

Ferdinand hung down his head, and remained silent.

“The boy might be as passionate and unreasonable as yourself; and, if any one spoke to you in that way, I am afraid you would not mind them. You were partial to the bird, and the idea of its death was distressing to you; but if you had *not* imagined it to be *your* robin, should you have spoken so sharply to the boy?”

“No, sir.”

“Then you will find, on a close examination of your own heart, that even your humanity, on this occasion, was prompted by selfish motives. No one will blame you for wishing to save the life of your favourite; but it might have been

done without any violence on your part, had you mildly represented to the boy his cruelty, and your wish to prevent the robin from receiving any injury.'

"Oh, sir," said Ferdinand, "I have acted very foolishly, and I much fear I shall never have patience enough to subdue my unfortunate temper."

"My dear boy," returned Mr. Smeaton, affectionately taking his hand, "be not discouraged in your first attempt at self-improvement. You have before you a difficult and arduous task, which will require much patience and self-control.— Evil habits, long indulged, are very hard to eradicate; and, perhaps, it



is easier to conquer a kingdom, than to gain a complete ascendancy over the human heart. But all things will yield before a steady perseverance in the path of well doing; and, I doubt not, if you pursue the plan of conduct I have laid down for you, that you will, ultimately, succeed; and, in time, regain the lost esteem of your friends, and become the pride and joy of your affectionate parents."

Ferdinand, with the permission of his father, remained some weeks with the good Governor and his son. He was no longer confined as a prisoner, but admitted to a friendly intercourse with his amiable family circle; and, though many things

happened to rouse his irritable feelings, he was so thoroughly convinced of the sinfulness of yielding to anger, that he resolutely persevered in bridling his imprudent tongue.

His residence at the castle produced the most salutary effect on his mind, and he returned to his paternal roof an altered and improved character; and, in after life, was as much distinguished for his generous and benevolent disposition, as he had before been condemned for his violent and irascible temper.

Esteemed by his parents, and tenderly beloved by his dear Felix, he no longer regretted the trials he had endured; but was often heard

to say, he should always remember, with gratitude, the kind advice he had received from Mr. Smeaton, and the hours he had spent in prison.

THE END.

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